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REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with article 9, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the work programme of the Unit for 1996-1997, the indicative list for 1997-1998 and beyond and the internal roster.

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ANNEX

Work programme of the Joint Inspection Unit for 1996-1997, indicative list for 1997-1998 and beyond and internal roster

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The following work programme has been drawn up in accordance with article 9, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 31/192 of 22 December 1976, and takes into account the guidelines laid out in Assembly resolutions 42/218 of 21 December 1987, 44/184 of 19 December 1989 and 45/237 of 21 December 1990, decision 46/446 of 20 December 1991, resolution 47/201 of 22 December 1992, resolution 48/221 of 23 December 1993 and resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996. The work programme is divided into three sections: section II lists the JIU work programme for 1996-1997, section III contains an indicative list of issues the Unit has identified as potential subjects to be dealt with after the completion of the ongoing reports and section IV comprises a roster of suggestions that are before the Unit for consideration as subjects that might be taken up in the medium term. As hitherto, the work programme is subject to change in the course of the year: new reports may be added; planned reports may be modified, postponed or cancelled when circumstances warrant; and titles may be changed to reflect the new thrust of reports. The Unit would highly appreciate receiving any comments from the Member States, the legislative organs, other external and internal oversight bodies and the secretariats of participating organizations on the content of this work programme and/or the indicative list for 1997-1998 and beyond and the internal roster.

II. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1996-1997

A. Reports on management, budgetary and administrative issues

1. Coordination and harmonization of the work of oversight bodies

2. The purpose of this study is to examine the roles and responsibilities of existing internal and external oversight bodies within the United Nations system and make recommendations to enhance the overall performance of these bodies and promote the more effective use of resources. Specifically, for these oversight bodies, the Joint Inspection Unit will identify and compare individual mandates, areas of skill competencies, working procedures and standards and the mechanisms in place for the sharing of information among bodies doing related work. The study will be carried out within the context of resolution 48/218 A of 23 December 1993 in which the General Assembly emphasized the need to ensure respect for the separate and distinct roles of external and internal oversight mechanisms and also to strengthen the external oversight mechanisms. This was reaffirmed by the Assembly in its subsequent resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and most recently in resolution 50/233. The report will, in addition, make recommendations and provide a model for establishing and/or improving internal

oversight mechanisms for smaller organizations of the system. While addressing specific suggestions from the Secretariat of the United Nations, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the study will continue to pursue issues identified in the JIU report on accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system (A/50/503 and Add.1), which previously provided a summary of conceptual and practical relationships, patterns, common trends, initiatives, and possible actions to help strengthen and enhance accountability, management improvement and oversight actions in what must become a continuous process.

2. Role of publications - Part II

3. This is the second part of a report that was included in the 1995-1996 work programme at the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 50/206 C of 23 December 1995, endorsing a recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The first part of the report, which is currently under preparation, covers publications policy and practice system-wide, including issues relating to cost-effectiveness, and reviews developments in this area since the issuance in 1984 of a JIU report on the same subject. Part II of the report will evaluate the role publications play in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies. Given the great number of publications produced by each organization, the Inspectors intend to focus the second part of the study on publications of the Secretariat only, subject to further modification.

3. Common services in Geneva

4. This report will be the second by the Unit on the subject of common services. The first report, which reviewed common services for organizations co-located in New York, was entitled "Common services at United Nations Headquarters" (JIU/REP/96/5). The reports in this series have a common objective: to contribute to the establishment of a more rational inter-organizational framework for the development, operation and management of common services with a view to reduced overhead costs, increased collaboration and cost-effectiveness at major Headquarters duty stations.

4. Review of management and administration in the International Labour Organization

5. The report will be the first in a series following up on the recent JIU report on accountability, management improvement, and oversight in the United Nations system (A/50/503 and Add.1). The series will begin with a review of the recent major management reforms and initiatives listed for ILO in part II of that report. In conducting this review, consideration will be given to the applicability of the recommendations contained in part I of the report. Similar follow-up reviews will be undertaken by JIU for other participating organizations in future years.

5. United Nations access control system (card access system)

6. This item was originally included in the 1995 work programme following a decision in 1994 by the Secretariat to abandon a project aimed at tightening security arrangements at the Headquarters premises for which payment in the amount of $938,764 had already been effected to an outside contractor. JIU postponed its own report (the purpose of which was to probe the decision-making process that led to the commissioning and subsequent abandonment of the card access system, with a view to deriving lessons for the future in the judicious use of the Organization's limited resources) pending the outcome of a report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which was subsequently issued under cover of a note by the Secretary-General (A/50/791). This report referred the matter to the Investigation Section of the Office and a decision regarding the JIU report was again postponed. The findings of the Office's investigation have been made known to the Unit and will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. JIU will await the decision of the Assembly on the matter and decide accordingly.

6. Feasibility study on the relocation of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to the Turin Centre

7. This study was included in the 1996-1997 work programme at the request of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), which is considering the relocation of the Institute from Geneva to Turin. Given that this issue was an agenda item of the meeting of the Board scheduled for September 1996, the study was carried out on a priority basis and was issued in August 1996 (JIU/REP/96/2). The main objective of the study was to assess the cost benefits that could be derived from the move of UNITAR to Turin. This included consideration of the conditions prevailing in Turin with regard to premises and facilities, the legal implications for host country agreements and the contractual status of staff, and the institutional and practical proposed relations with other institutions already based in Turin.

B. Reports on operational activities for development

1. United Nations system support for science and technology in Latin America and the Caribbean

8. Since the adoption in 1979 of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development, this subject has become a prominent feature of the legislative directives and the substantive and operational programmes of organizations within the United Nations system. In line with relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the report will evaluate, on the basis of selected projects, the effective contribution of the United Nations system to endogenous capacity-building in science and technology. This will be the third of a series of JIU reports on the subject. The two previous ones were on Africa (A/50/125-E/1995/19, annex) and on Asia and the Pacific (A/50/721). This evaluation was originally requested by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. Fellowships in the United Nations system

9. This system-wide inspection was requested by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions. It comes about as the result of the eleventh meeting of Senior Fellowship Officers of the United Nations system held in September 1994, at which a number of issues were highlighted and concerns raised in connection with fellowship administration in the United Nations. The objectives of the report are to assess the contribution of United Nations fellowships to capacity-building, to identify optimal modalities for fellowship administration and thus to suggest ways in which the current administration of fellowships in the United Nations system could be enhanced through the possible streamlining and centralization of existing structures, the development of standardization and improved coordination, and to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of its findings.

3. The use of United Nations system information technologies and information systems in support of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

10. This report combines two of the current priority issues in the United Nations system: development in Africa, as reflected in the new strategic directions being adopted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, and the use of information technologies and information systems in the United Nations system, in line with the African Information Society Initiative adopted by ECA at its Conference of Ministers in May 1996. The report is included in the 1996-1997 work programme as an internal proposal and serves as a practical follow-up to the report on the use of information technologies and information systems in the United Nations to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. The principal objective of the report is to identify ways in which United Nations system organizations can take better advantage of the potential of information technologies to leapfrog the development effort in Africa.

C. Peacekeeping and related operations

11. JIU has in recent years produced several major reports on peacekeeping and related operations (Some proposals for improving the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations (JIU/NOTE/92/1); Staffing of the United Nations peacekeeping and related missions (civilian component) (A/48/421); Sharing responsibilities in peacekeeping: the United Nations and regional organizations (A/50/571); Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations (A/50/572); Military component of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/50/576); and Strengthening the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention (A/50/853)) and as part of the current work programme is carrying out a study entitled "Coordination at Headquarters and field level, within the framework of 'An Agenda for Peace', between the United Nations agencies in peacebuilding: an assessment of the possibilities". At this time, it does not envisage undertaking any studies on this subject in the 1996/1997 work programme.

D. Humanitarian assistance

Execution of humanitarian assistance programmes through government agencies and non-governmental organizations ("implementing partners")

12. This report was originally foreseen for inclusion in the 1995-1996 work programme. Its objective is to contribute to clarifying the criteria governing legal, administrative, financial and reporting relationships between donor organizations and implementing partners. It will cover all organizations involved in one way or another in humanitarian assistance programmes and utilizing implementing partners.

III. INDICATIVE LIST OF POTENTIAL ITEMS FOR 1997-1998 AND BEYOND

13. The following are indications of subjects of inspection, investigation and evaluation, in the four priority areas of the current JIU work programme, which the Inspectors intend to pursue during the course of 1997-1998 and beyond. Most of these subjects are requested by the legislative organs or suggested by the secretariats of the participating organizations, while others are generated internally. The list is tentative and does not necessarily imply that JIU is firmly committed to taking up these subjects.

A. Management, budgetary and administrative issues

1. (a) System-wide review on ways to improve programming methodology;

   (b) System-wide review of planning, programming and budgeting procedures;

   (c) Review (evaluation) of programme budgeting in the United Nations system.

2. Streamlining of the intergovernmental machinery in substantial/programmatic and administrative areas: a blueprint for reform.

3. Effectiveness of the performance appraisal system in the United Nations.

4. A comparative analysis of systems, procedures and cost of document preparation in the United Nations system, taking a cross-section that includes the United Nations and a few agencies.

5. Review of management and administration in the World Health Organization (WHO).

6. Common and joint services in Vienna.

7. Bulk funding for regular programme activities in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) field offices.

B. Operational activities for development

1. System-wide assessment of the needs and possibilities, ways and means of integrating cultural dimensions in development strategies and in planning, monitoring and evaluating development programmes and projects.

IV. INTERNAL ROSTER

A. Management, budgetary and administrative issues

1. Inspection of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

2. Inspection of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

3. Ways of improving the marketing of United Nations revenue-producing activities.

4. Use of experts and consultants.

5. Status of agreement between host countries and United Nations Headquarters and specialized agencies system-wide.

B. Operational activities for development

1. An assessment of the restructuring of economic, social and related sectors of the United Nations.

2. Financial and administrative implications of a meaningful UNDP presence and activities in the net contributor countries.

3. An analysis of the number, size and cost of conferences, seminars, workshops and other meetings and gatherings in the technical cooperation programmes of the United Nations system.

4. Relationship between the funding programmes and the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

5. Cooperation between Global Environment Facility implementing agencies and the United Nations specialized agencies.

6. Effectiveness and efficiency of the alternative development - supply reduction and demand reduction programmes of UNDP and its relationship to other technical, economic and social projects of the United Nations system.

7. Impact of new UNDP support cost agreements.

8. Evaluation of Agenda 21.

9. A review of training in the United Nations system.

C. Peacekeeping and related operations

1. Analysis of the resources devoted to peacekeeping emergencies and disaster relief programmes, compared with regular economic and social development assistance.

2. Peacekeeping operations, office and living-quarter camps: budgeting, procurement, management and removal from one mission and reinstallation in another mission.